

Lady Ashworth

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Summary: A drabble written for #CQChallenge1. - Thomas is anxious to get home, but hesitates to accept help from Lady Ashworth (OFC).

Lady Ashworth

Sir Thomas Sharpe stood gazing helplessly over the horizon outside of the post office.

"Sir Thomas, you look troubled."

The voice behind him was feminine, and he knew exactly who it belonged to.

"Lady Ashworth," he said as he removed his hat. "Yes, I rode in today to enjoy this lovely weather, and now my horse has wandered off. I insisted on tying him to the post myself, and, well, it seems I did so poorly. Now I have no way to get home."

"Surely you can rent a carriage."

"They're all in use for the evening. And I must get home, or Lucille will worry."

"How is your sister?"

"She is quite well, thank you."

Thomas looked toward the horizon again, hoping to see his horse.

"I'm on my way home," said Lady Ashworth. "Allerdale Hall is not too far off course. I would be happy to see that you get home."

He smiled. "That is most kind of you, but would it be proper? You being alone..."

"It is an open carriage, Sir Thomas, and the driver will do as a chaperone."

Thomas hesitated as he looked once more for his horse. Lucille would not be happy to find he had been alone with Lady Ashworth. And yet...

He stared into her eyes for a moment and tried to smile, successfully raising the corner of his mouth.

"Very well. I appreciate your assistance."

He bowed his head and extended his arm for her to take as he escorted her to her carriage. He helped her up, and followed her, happy to see that there was a seat across from her. Lady Ashworth smiled.

"Always the gentleman."

"We wouldn't want to ruin your reputation, Lady Ashworth."

"Please, call me Elizabeth. You've insisted I call you Thomas. It's only fair."

Thomas nodded. "Very well, Miss Elizabeth."

In private moments, alone in his workshop, he had let her name roll softly from his tongue as he pictured her face. He saw her face in his dreams. He kissed that face in his dreams.

That was why he dare not be alone with her. He couldn't let her know his feelings, for he was sure she returned them.

If Lucille found out...

He shuddered at the thought.

"You couldn't possibly be cold, Sir Thomas."

"Just a chill," he said with a smile. "Someone must have walked over my grave."

Elizabeth shook her head. "Such a morbid thought."

They carried on with polite conversation, sharing news and social gossip, until the carriage approached the gates of Allerdale Hall.

"Thank you for the ride home. I would have been stranded if not for your kindness, but I can walk from here."

"Nonsense. That is quite a lot of land to cross."

"And lovely weather in which to cross it. I shall enjoy it."

Thomas climbed down from the carriage and removed his hat with a bow. He waved after the carriage, then began his walk toward the house. As he got closer, he saw Lucille waiting in the doorway.

End  
file.